



MEDIA RELEASE

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INVESTING IN CHILD AND MATERNAL HEALTH VITAL TO TACKLING INEQUALITY

Labor's agenda for tackling inequality – [Growing Together](#) – shows improving child and maternal health is critical to reducing inequality in Australia.

While we like to think that Australia is the land of the fair go, the reality is that not every child starts life on an equal footing.

For some children, disadvantage begins even before they are born.

Growing Together shows that many health and wellbeing problems identified in adults have their origins in negative antenatal and early childhood experiences.

Research shows that inequality between children from advantaged and disadvantaged backgrounds emerges early and widens steadily over time.

Growing Together explains that while Australia performs well in some areas of child and maternal health, we are failing in other areas. In particular, there are vast inequalities among some children in Australia:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are more than twice as likely to be developmentally vulnerable than non-Indigenous children;
- Children who are not proficient in English are more likely to be developmentally vulnerable;
- Children living in remote Australia are more likely to be developmentally vulnerable;
- Children living in socio-economically disadvantaged communities are more likely to be developmentally vulnerable.

Labor understands the earlier we invest in a child's health, wellbeing and development, the bigger the benefits.

When we invest in services that improve child health and wellbeing, we reduce the chance of that child being left behind later in life.

When we fail to devote these resources, we put at risk the future prosperity of our children and our nation.

Growing Together offers a new agenda that recognises the economic and social benefits of investing in maternal and child health.

Labor's ideas for the future include:

- Improving the coordination and integration of antenatal care and support;
- Strengthening continuity of care in maternal and child health;
- Placing child and maternal health services in alternative settings;
- Supporting new parents, particularly fathers, to spend more time with their babies in the critical early months of life.

Labor understands that supporting child and maternal health are critical investments in our nation's future. Investment must be targeted, high quality and rigorously assessed, to ensure that funding is achieving the very best outcomes for children and parents.

Giving our young children the best possible start in life is a social and economic imperative.

The full report of *Growing Together* is available at www.alp.org.au/growing_together

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